13 JULY 1975

When Good Guys Turn Into Bad Guys

By Tom Dowling
Washington Star Staff Writer

Men learn from history that men never learn anything from history, Hegel ruefully observed.

Assuming that a democratic society that maintains governmental agencies to snoop on its own citizens and eliminate vexatious foreigners is at some variance with its own historical lessons, it seems pointless to quarrel with Hegel. Indeed, the proof of his dictum is that we should be so astonished at the recent sordid disclosures about the U.S. intelligence community. After all, evidence of the amok qualities of the CIA and FBI has lain about largely unremarked for years. The CIA assassination attempt on Prince Sihanouk has been known for a decade; similarly, the FBI bug on Martin Luther King. The CIA's use of foundations and labor unions as cash conduits, the agency's financial relationship with the National Student Association and the New York Police Department — these are but a few ancient examples of the CIA'S domestic intelligence operations that flourished with a headline and faded with a shrug.

EVEN THE REPORTED principal item in the CIA assassination dossier prepared by the Rockefeller Commission, the agency's assistance in the 1961 shooting of Rafael Trujillo, turns out to have been published with convincing detail in the April 13, 1963 edition of The *New Republic* — though at the time the magazine saw fit to delete President Kennedy's possible knowledge of the plot. The article caused so little stir that *The New Republic's* own editors had to be reminded of their own considerable scoop a mere decade after the fact.

Alas, the problem with the FBI and the CIA has not been a derth of information about them, but rather a kind of cheerful, sometimes even a vainglorious indifference to their historical meaning.

And, if men learn from history that they learn nothing from it, what do they learn from art? About the same. In the aftermath of the Vietnam debacle we have been correctly reminded that the one key prophylactic text for our policy makers there was Graham Green's 1955 Vietnamese novel, "The Quiet American." The American of the title is Alden Pyle, an apposité upper-class, Ivy League CIA kind of name. Pyle, as Greene describes him, "was impregnably armoured by his good intentions and his ignorance." He is our old friend, the American Innocent, determined to carry the day overseas by his well-intentioned arrogance born of enfeebled Puritan heritage. The British journalist Fowler tells Pyle: "You and your like are trying to make a war with the help of people who just aren't interested . . . they don't want our white skins around telling them what they want . . . Isms and Ocracies." Fifty thousand American lives later, it sounds a bit like Dr. Kissinger's recent address to the Japan Society.

AND IF GREENE'S art provided a prophetic, if ignored, lesson in a somber novel, he was no less prescient in his 1958 Cuban "entertainment", "Our Man in Havanna." E. Howard Hunt, the Bay of Pigs Mastermind; the poison meals and cigar for Fidel; the comic exploits of the CIA-hired Mafia Gang that Coundn't Shoot Straight — they are all but the historical progeny of Green's Wormold, the English vacuum cleaner salesman in Havanna who is co-opted by British intelligence to supply espionage details of Batista's Cuba and in desperation sends London the blueprint of his vacuum sweeper. The blueprint is taken for the design of a Cuban nuclear weapon — in a bizarre historical foreshadowing of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Greene has Wormold reflect on the Cold War lessons of the vacuum cleaner industry: "Take Phastkleaners and Nucleaners. There's not much difference between the two machines any more than there is between two human beings, one Russian — or German — and one British. There would be no competition and no war if it wasn't for the ambition of a few men in both firms." Substitute CIA for "Phastkleaner" and KGB for "Nucleaner" and you have the secret dynamic that drives an espionage agency, ours and theirs alike.

Art and History? They are fine things, but not teachers — not at least in the pervasive sense required to force attitudinal changes in a mass society. There is, of course, at present the irony that we are receptive — significantly, some say overly receptive — to the disclosure of the scope of governmental egregiousness, both in grand designs like Vietnam and in petty ones like the CIA's and FBI's statutory and constitutional abuses. That feverish intensity which traditionally enlightens the end?

BE THAT AS it may, something of a re-learning process is underway in the pop culture and mass journalism that dominate our whole society with an immediacy that history and art can never attain. Whether these retrospective apercus on the CIA and FBI will make much difference is moot. It was, for example, a fact that the Vietnam War was universally perceived as a tragic loss for years before its final termination. This perception was drummed into the public consciousness not only by newspapers, magazines, and TV newscasts, but by popular music, television talk shows and even sitcoms. Still, the war dragged on.

Nevertheless, just as the wickedness of the Vietnam War long ago became a general American cultural tenet, so now does espionage — particularly the sort practiced by the CIA and the FBI — particularly the sort practiced by the CIA and the FBI — seem to be having a negative renaissance of its own.

Indeed, it is instructive to glance through the men's magazines on the newsstands in recent months. The government spooks and gumshoes who were once the staple of male romantic fantasies are now pictured either as buffoons or villians. No memoirs of two-fisted G-Men out-gunning the mob, no sagas of CIA operatives seducing some Soviet Ninatchka the better to make off with the Kremlin's nuclear secrets. Far from it.

The soil in which FBI-CIA clownishness and/or wickedness originally took root was, of course, Watergate. Liddy, McCord and Baldwin were former FBI agents; Hunt and McCord were ex-CIA men and Barker, Sturgis, Martinez were contract employes. As it turned out, this CIA-FBI Old Boys' Club Mission for Nixon was not without Gestapo overtones, though the group's execution of it had a kind of Keystone Cop ineptitude. And so, as Watergate exposures spread, ultimately entangling the FBI's COINTEL and the CIA's domestic intelligence operations and assassination plots, the popular imagination was drawn in two different directions. On the one hand, the snoopers were figures of ridicule; on the other, they were a secret government, a national civil liberties menace.

THE JUNE ISSUE of True—a magazine that formerly rated CIA-FBI feats of derring-do in the same league with deep sea fishing, grand prix race driving and big game hunting — exploits the comic aspect of the U.S. espionage nexus. We get, for starters, the Watergate "dirty trickster" memoirs of Martin Kelly, Don Segretti's operative in the Florida primary black-propaganda campaign against Sen. Edmund Muskie. In breathless collegiate terms Kelly tells readers how he set off stink bombs at Muskie picnics; hired a nude co-ed to parade in front of Sen. Ed's Gainsville motel, shouting "I love Muskie;" unleashed mice, birds, and tricky questions at Muskie press conferences, and even planned a trip to the Paris Peace Conference in order to sign Le Duc Tho's name to endorsements of Muskie that would be mailed to U.S. congressmen. Though Kelly's tale is related in an enthusiastic frat-house tone, its hortatory impact on a more subliminal level is to remind us through comedy of the exceedingly dangerous web we weave when first we practice to deceive.

As an even more jocular reinforcement of this point, True also treats us to a first-person account of the Great Duchess County, New York Drug Raid on Timothy Leary in 1966. The author, who led the lawmen's bust, was none other than G. Gordon Liddy, at the time assistant D.A. in Duchess County. What is in-

continued